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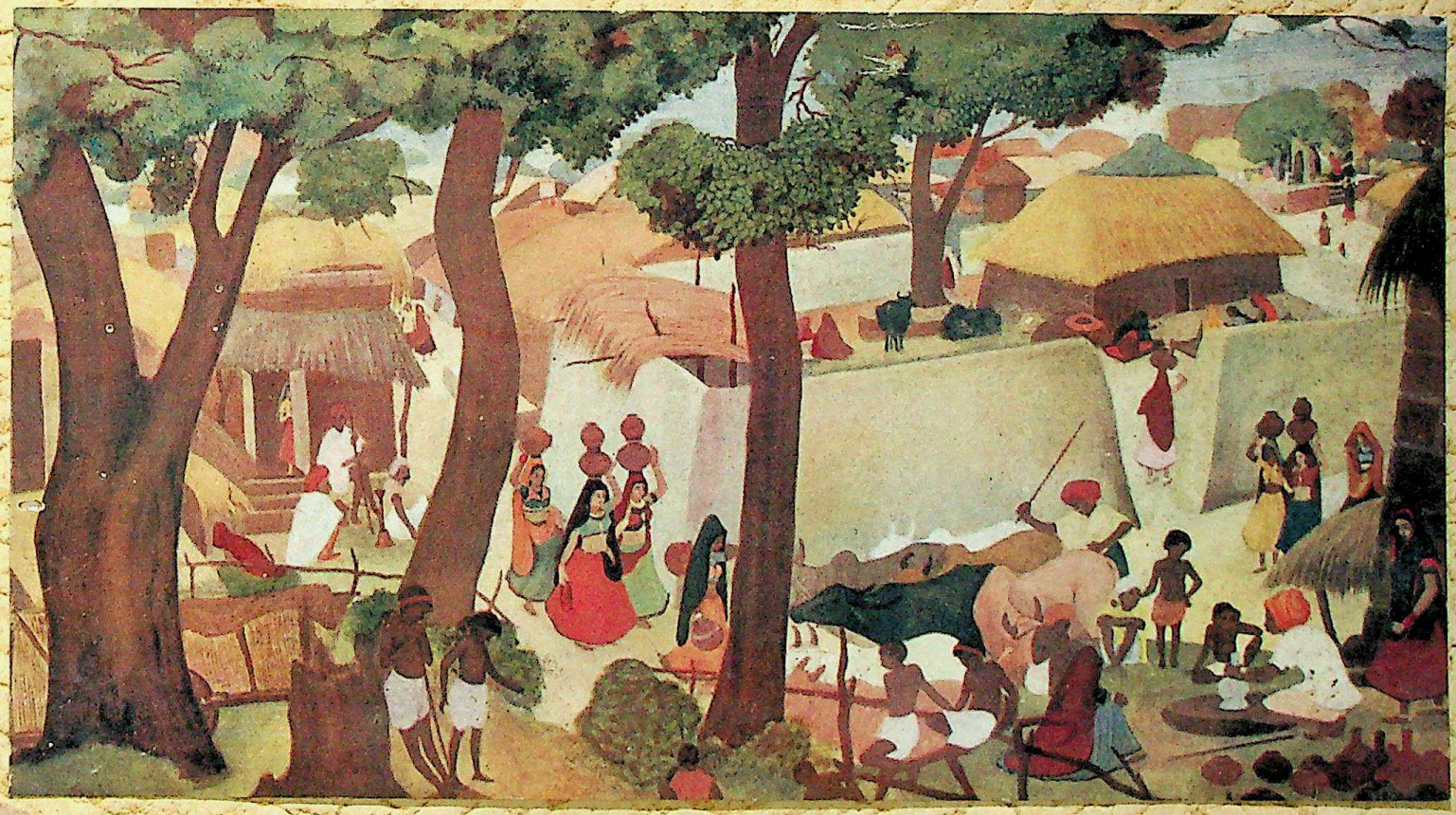
D. BADRI



DHOOMI MAL DHARAM DAS
NEW DELHI

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D. BADRI.

FORWORD BY
D. P. ROY CHOWDHURY

INTRODUCTION
BY
KRISHNA CHAITANYA

1951
DHOOMI MAL DHARAM DAS
NEW DELHI

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FOREWORD

Dhoomi Mal Dharam Das of New Delhi ought to be congratulated for launching a campaign to popularise the message of the artists through publication of their art works. The need was long felt and it is encouraging to note that they have taken up the cause in right earnest.

In this volume appears D. Badri, who has already earned a reputation as an artist of considerable merits. Coincidentally he happens to be a disciple of mine. I have used the word disciple without hesitation, because the relation between the teacher and the taught is more than the usual bondage that keeps the head of the institution aloof from students on account of the indispensible discipline. As a matter of fact we learnt together. Hence understanding from both sides prevailed over official contact, we became friends. One sympathised with the other on failures and shared the joy in cases of success.

I am under obligation to write a few words on the achievements of Badri, though it is a difficult if not a delicate task, for me to go into technical details. Nevertheless the truth must be told and that Badri is a true artist. He has the gift and necessary diposition to struggle for art. One can easily come into contact in this volume his courageous handling of the difficult compositions. More matured artists would have thought twice of plunging into subjects which he has chosen for self-expression. Coming to his drawing I feel proud to record that he still retains the respect for understandable form despite the ravaging invasions of ultra-modern trends. Too correct representation of form often loses its artistic value due to dead mechanical accuracy. It is indeed a relief to see that the line drawings have not submitted to this rigid accuracy of surface facts, on the contrary they reveal life. Let us hope Dhoomi Mal Dharam Das will bring out more volumes like this and thus give a chance to the public to come in contact with the world of artists of this country.

Madras.
April 26 1951

D. P. Roy Chowdhury
Govt. School of Arts & Crafts

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INTRODUCTION

A profound awareness of the age old rhythms of Indian life, especially the life of Indian villages which are the oases where tradition lingers, protected from the encroachments of the urban and industrial era, distinguishes the paintings of D. Badri.

Originally hailing from Damerla in the Andhra districts, a place already known to the art world through its association with D. Rama Rao who died tragically young. Badri's family settled down in Madras, where he was born on July 1, 1914. His father, D. Raghava Rao, now retired, was Head Artist in the Pusa Agricultural Research Institute, Bihar. A portrait painter of great ability, Raghava Rao was the first real teacher of Badri. In 1933 he joined the Government School of Arts, Madras, and studied under D. P. Roy Chowdhury for four years. At Madras he was the contemporary of Prodosh Das Gupta, Paul Raj and Syed Ahmad. In 1939 he joined the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, as staff artist and has been working there ever since. For the last four years he has been the Joint Secretary of the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi.

Slowly, but steadily, Badri has built up an all India reputation. His *In Remembrance* won the first prize in the Indian Section in the Kodaikanal Art Exhibition of 1939. In 1939, his *Toy Seller* secured the

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Punjab Government's prize at the Punjab Fine Art Society's Exhibition, Lahore. The *Dark Beauty* was declared by the judges as the best picture of the year in the annual exhibition of the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society held in 1945. *Good Earth* won the second prize and *Colour and Contour* the first prize for composition in the oriental style in the 1948 and 1949 Annuals respectively of the A.I.F.A.C.S. *In Tune with Nature* won the Dunn and Zukerman prize in the 1950 Annual of the A.I.F.C.S and was awarded the Bihar Governor's Gold Medal for the best picture in the All India Exhibition held at Patna in the same year. The line drawing *Rag Hindol* was accepted at the Exhibition of contemporary Indian art, held at Burlington House, London, in 1948.

Badri's pictures are in the collections of H. H. the Nawab of Bhopal, H. H. the Maharaja of Nabha, H. H. the Maharaja of Patiala and other connoisseurs. Several of his works have been acquired by the Government of India for decorating the Indian Embassies abroad. *Colour and Contour* is in the Indian Embassy, Switzerland, *Good Earth* in Prague and *Toilet* in Paris. His line drawing *Lakshmi Narayan* was presented by the Government of India to the Government of China for their Art Gallery.

Russell Flint, Gauguin, Cezanne, Amrita Sher Gil and Rajput art are some of the influences which have played on Badri. In all these cases, the influence is limited to the moulding of the general outlook and does not extend to the determination of his specific idiom. From Flint, Badri has inhertited a devotion to accurate drawing which comes out to advantage in *Dark Beauty*. Gauguin suggested to him the value of decorative surfaces and Cezanne the importance of depth. There is an easy, confident transcription of the third dimension in Badri's panoramas. It is interesting to note that even in a picture like the *Bridegroom*, painted in the folk art style, Badri seeks to rescue the final surface from becoming a flat pattern by an indication of incipient planes; from left to right successive figures occupy progressively receding planes. From Amrita Sher-Gil, Badri learned how to refine an intense appetite for colour by their harmonious and balanced juxtaposition.

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Badri has been compared to Brueghel by many critics. The resemblance is more due to a convergence of outlooks than to any actual derivation. Badri was moved to mirror the rural life primarily by his own genuine sympathy and if any influence has played on his specific visualisation, it is Rajput art. Careful students will note that Brueghel's boisterousness is absent in Badri's art, though it is equally democratic in its outlook. And the quality which dominates Badri's work is, likewise, absent in Brueghel. This quality is a profound yet subdued lyricism, giving a poetic halation to details drawn with realism, tempering the harshness and formlessness of the external scene with a certain grace and delicacy in the process of transformation to art.

••

Nearly two thousand years ago, when the statesmanship of Augustus was confronted with the task of arresting the corrosive action of turban sophistication on the traditional ways of life and the sturdy Roman character, it found a powerful ally in the poetry of Virgil. *Georgics,* The title of his book of poems, literally meant "the labour of the land". Badri's works are the pictorial equivalents of the *Georgics.* We see men at work in the fields or leading their cattle to the pastures. Under tranquil skies women go about their work, drawing water from the village wells, making the *Chicks* that will afford protection from the heat of summer or cutting grass for their cattle. We attend village fairs, sharing in the simple joy of the peasants. Throughout, the narrative manner retains a limpid clarity, a coherence of lines which solves the problems involved in the representation of crowds with admirable fluency, a sensuous gaiety of color that never surfeits. These luminous, unaffected transcriptions have a perennial efficacy in awakening in us a new love for the good earth, our ancient mother.

KRISHNA CHAITANYA.

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PLATES

1. In Tune with Nature
2. Dark Beauty
3. Grass Cutters
4. Homeward Bound
5. Village Well
6. Mud Pots
7. Bride
8. Chick Makers
9. Milking Time
10. Bridegroom
11. Swing
12. Construction
13. Village Mela
14. Good Earth
15. Youth & Age
16. Cow boy
17. Dance
18. Plough Man

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IN TUNE WITH NATURE

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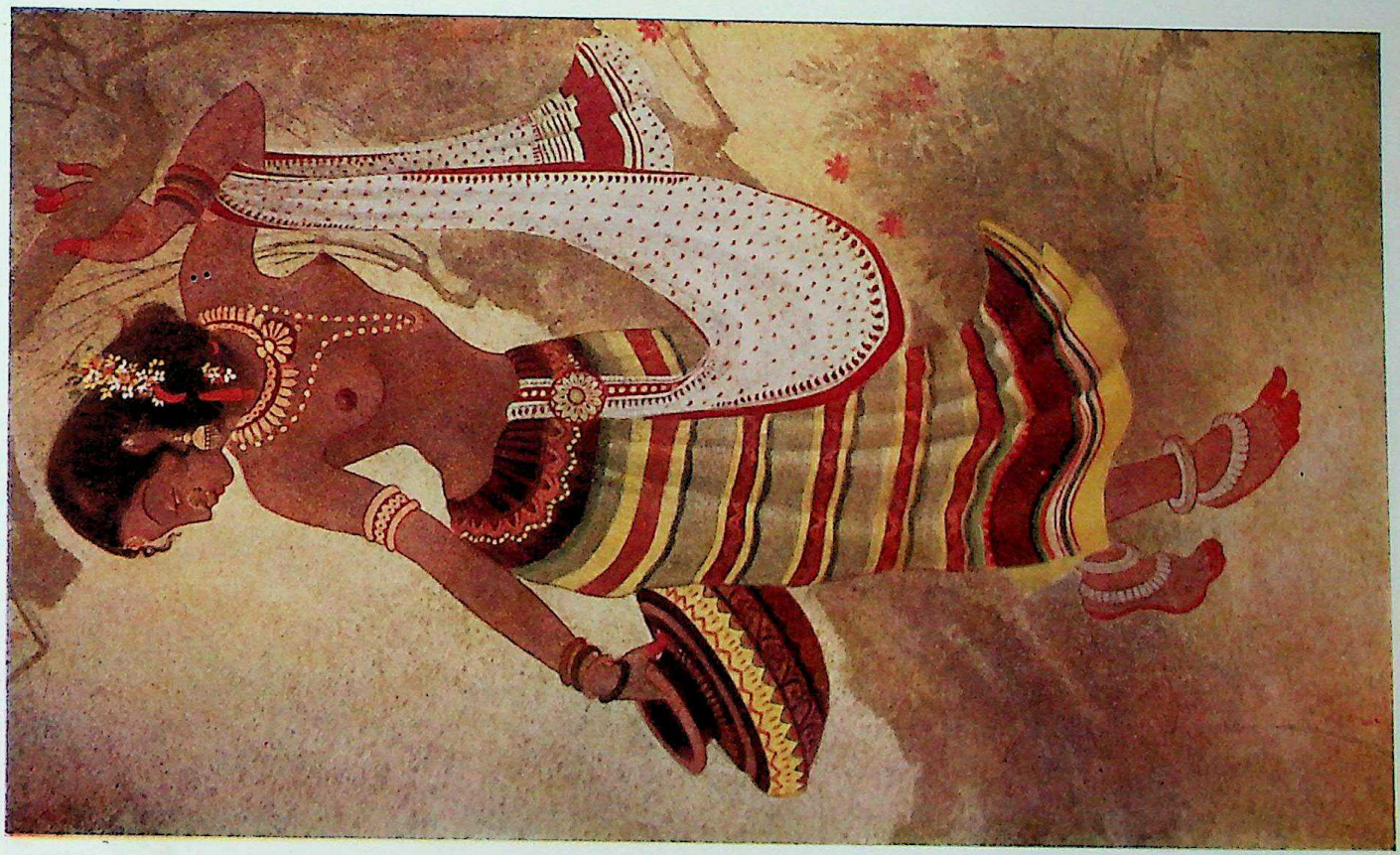

DARK BEAUTY

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GRASS CUTTERS

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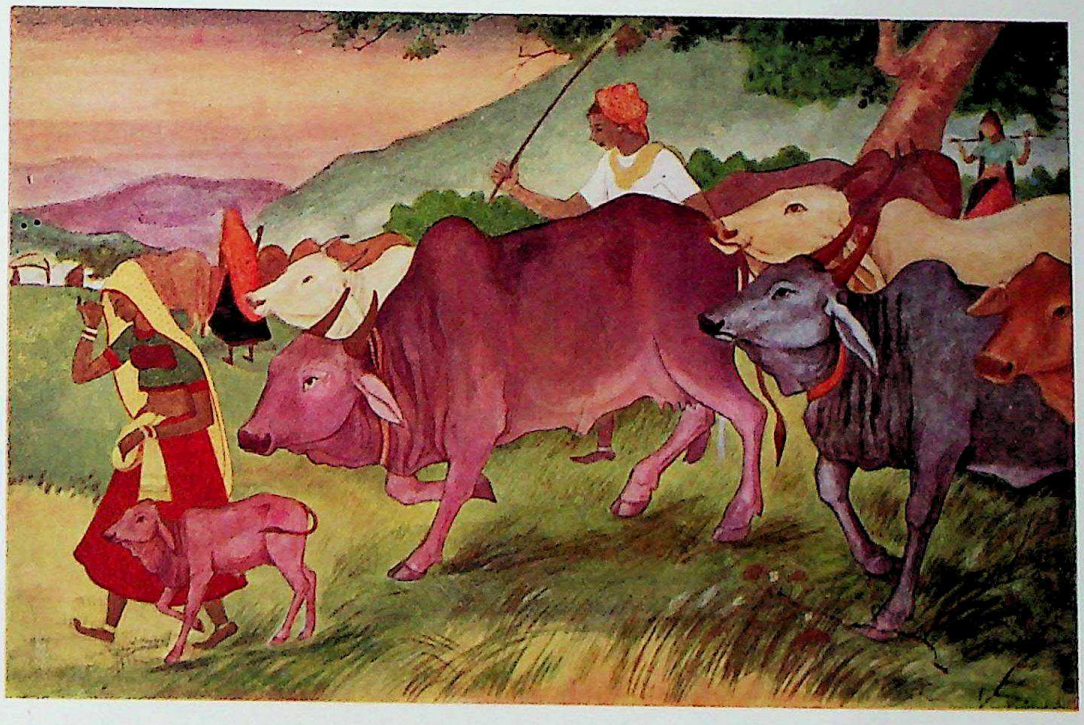

HOMEWARD BOUND

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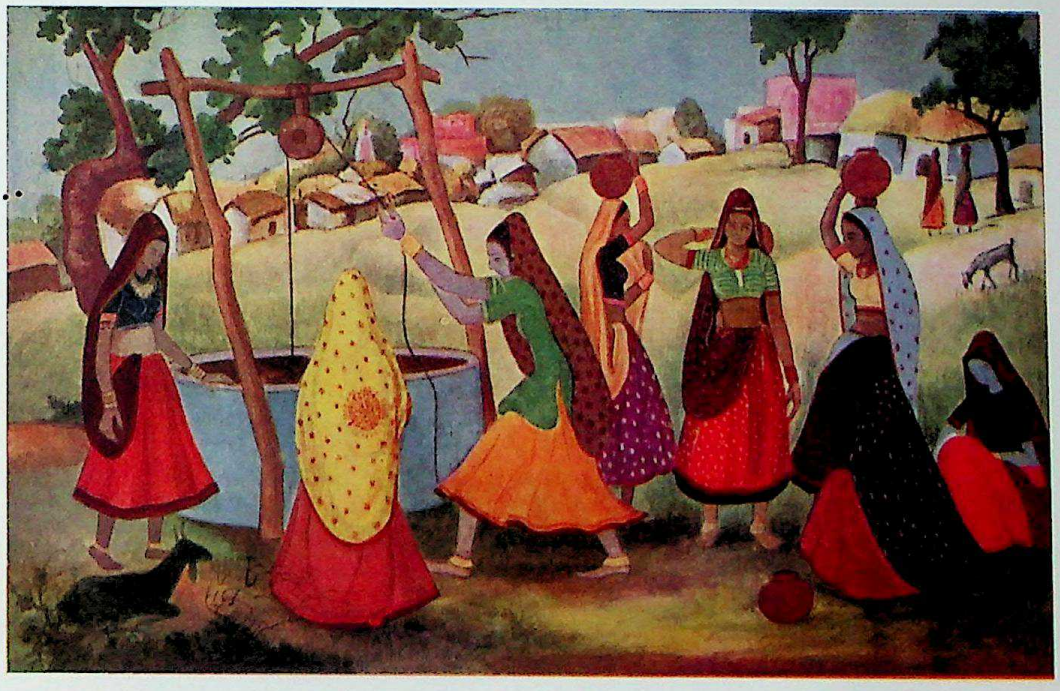

VILLAGE WELL

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MUD POTS

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BRIDE

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CHICK MAKERS

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MILKING TIME

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BRIDEGROOM

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SWING

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CONSTRUCTION

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VILLAGE MELA

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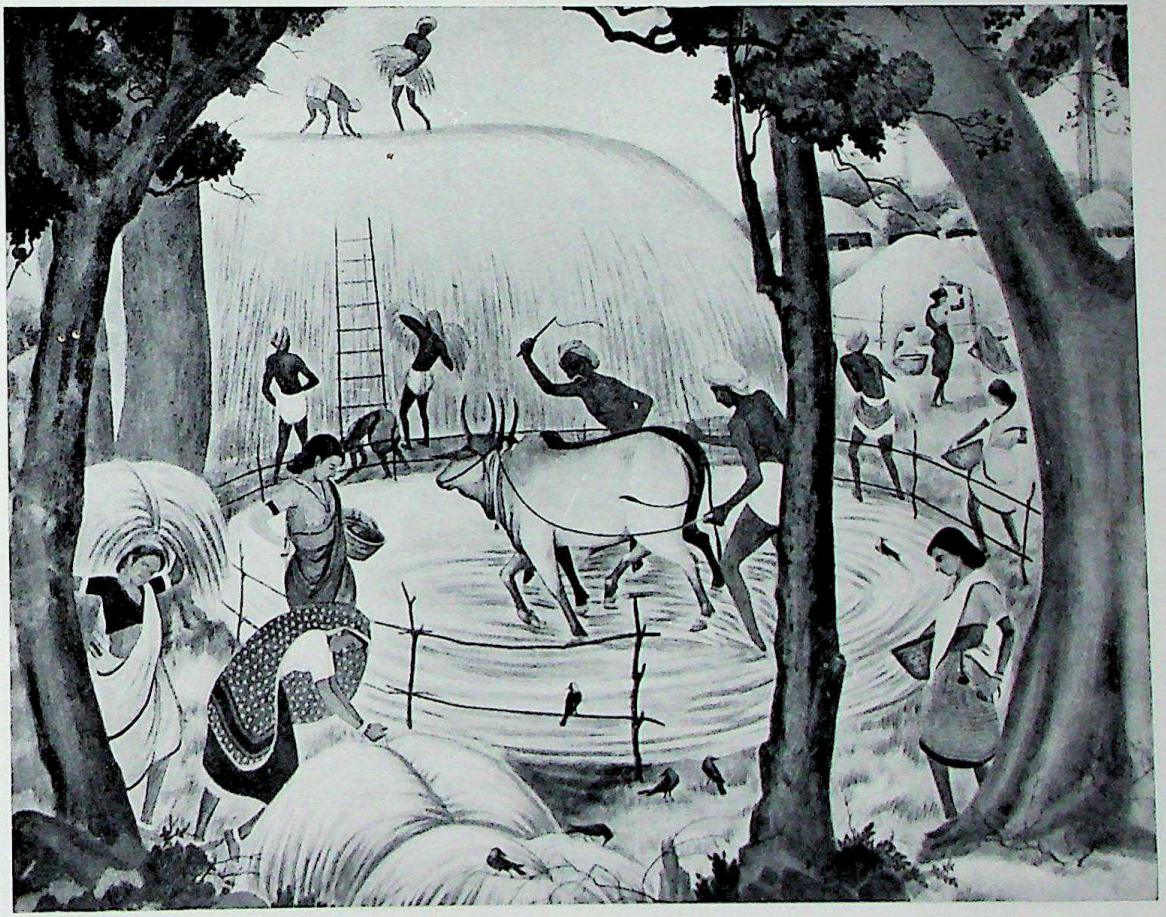

GOOD EARTH

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YOUTH & AGE

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COW BOY

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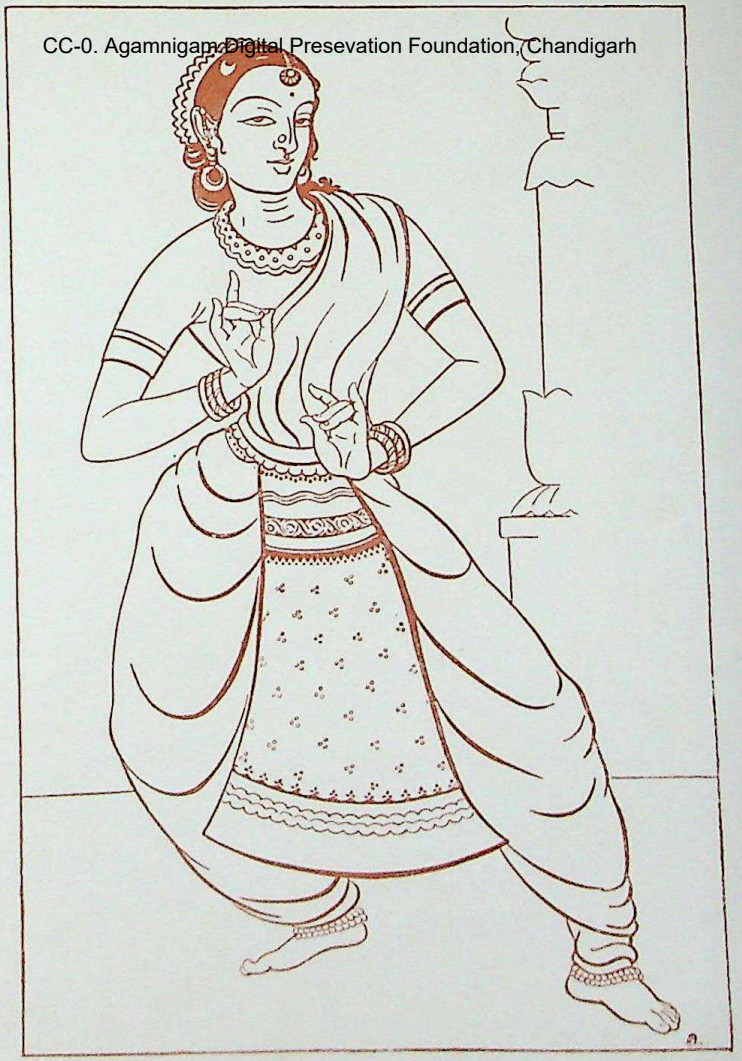

DANCE

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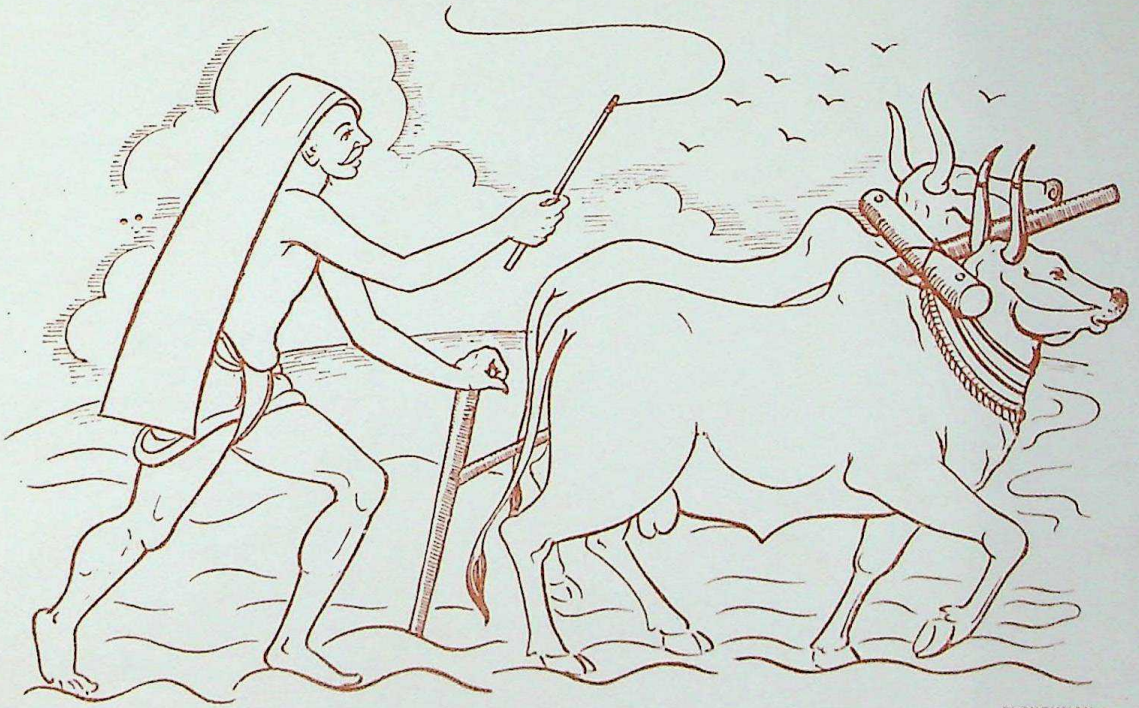

PLOUGHMAN

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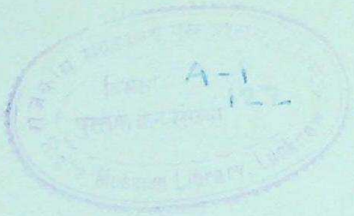

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